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Summary

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Draft 1976 Regional Transportation Plan

**Towards
a Balanced
Transportation
System**

**prepared by
Southern California Association of Governments**

december 1975

PREFACE

Southern California is moving in new directions to improve all forms of transportation. These new directions are a result of actions by the SCAG Executive Committee, which adopted the Southland's first comprehensive regional transportation plan on March 20, 1975.

This plan established a set of regional goals, policies and recommendations for developing an over-all network of travel. Moreover, it provided a better means of bringing state and federal money into the region to plan, construct and improve public transit, highways and other modes.

As conditions change with time, so do our plans for improving transportation in Southern California. Updates of the plan are required by law. This plan, the 1976 Regional Transportation Plan, is the first of these refinements.

This draft, 1976 RTP, is scheduled for adoption by the SCAG Executive Committee in April of 1976. Comments regarding the content of the Plan are appreciated.

INTRODUCTION

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is primarily a policy document which provides a framework for the development of a regional transportation system. It does not outline a specific system; it does, however, set the parameters of that system. It is designed to aid transportation decision-making at the regional and subregional levels. The RTP recognizes that the completed system will have (significant) effects on the region, in terms of air quality, land use patterns, societal benefits, and so on; its recommended programs and policies are structured so that decision-making may, within the context of transportation planning, directly address some of these broader concerns. Additionally, it provides policy committees with up-to-date background information on transportation needs assessment, financial projections, evaluation of transportation system impacts, operations program, environmental assessment, and so forth.

The RTP adopted by SCAG in April of 1975, addressed many of the region's transportation problems, but a number of questions must still be answered. This 1976 update focuses on strengthening the programs adopted in 1975 (thus, some material in this document was presented and adopted last year), but new programs and policies have been added wherever called for, in the continuing effort to design for the region a well-balanced and effective transportation system.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the RTP is two-fold. It must satisfy several state and federal requirements and it must define the course of action Southern California should take to achieve a balanced transportation system.

Legal Purpose

In 1972, State legislation¹ was adopted requiring that state and federal transportation plans be prepared. The purpose of the plans is to "achieve a coordinated and balanced regional transportation system including mass transit, highway, railroads, maritime, and aviation facilities and services, consistent with socioeconomic and environmental needs and goals." This law required the initial adoption of a plan in 1975, with the adoption of plan updates annually for two years and biennially thereafter.

Other Federal regulations, issued jointly by the Federal Highway Administration and the Urban Mass Transportation Administrations, also require the development of a transportation plan consisting of short-range and long range elements.² SCAG has been designated the agency responsible under Federal and State law for carrying out this planning process, and the 1976 RTP meets this responsibility.

Other legal responsibilities are also addressed in the Plan. For example, the Federal Clean Air Act requires that each state adopt a plan to achieve and maintain air quality. Among the strategies required, when appropriate,

¹Chapter 1253 of the Acts of 1972 (generally known as AB 69).

²These regulations detail responsibilities for metropolitan planning organizations. They also include instructions for the preparation of the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Work Program, the Transportation System Management element, as well as procedures for certification.

are transportation control measures. The 1976 RTP contains policies and programs designed to address the specific issue of air quality. These regional transportation programs combined with pollution control programs from other sources will be part of the state-wide plan to be prepared and adopted by the California Air Resources Board.

The Regional Transportation Plan must also address federal and state requirements that transit services for the elderly and handicapped be improved. In addition, the Regional Transportation Plan will be used in the review of federal grant applications, and transit projects using Local Transportation Fund (SB 325) monies. The RTP should be viewed as a vehicle for addressing a wide variety of federal and state mandates.

Planning Purpose

Essentially, the function of the Plan is to guide the region in the development of a balanced transportation system. This system must: (1) serve all population groups and satisfy critical transportation needs; (2) combine existing and new modes into a single, coordinated system; (3) protect the environment; (4) use available revenues for the greatest possible benefit; and (5) help guide regional growth and development by supporting planned land uses. The RTP, then, is designed to help decision-makers reach appropriate transportation decisions which would lead to the eventual development of such a system.

PLANNING APPROACH

Most transportation plans concentrate on accessibility -- route-mileage, number of destinations reachable, travel-time improvement -- and their tradeoffs usually involve nothing more than choices of model improvements to increase that accessibility.

But transportation systems have far-reaching effects influencing the quality of life itself. In the RTP, concerns for traditional problems such as accessibility have been bounded by concerns for the region's well-being -- the most desirable uses of its lands, improvement of its air, conservation of its energy.

Eight critical transportation-related problems and concerns have been identified:

<u>Land Use</u>	How can the transportation system best serve the region and relate to planned land use?
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<u>Air Quality</u>	How can transportation be managed to improve the air quality in the region?
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<u>Energy</u>	How can transportation best be used to conserve energy resources?
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<u>Accessibility/Mobility</u>	How can the transportation system be planned to provide better access, especially for transit dependent persons? How can the transportation system be planned to improve the mobility of some of the region's population, particularly the elderly and handicapped?
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<u>Allocation of Resources</u>	How should limited resources be allocated to obtain the greatest benefit?
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<u>Institutional Arrangements</u>	What institutional arrangements will best satisfy the need for a balanced transportation system?
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<u>Technological Change</u>	How can the risk of implementing a rapidly obsolete system be avoided? How can planners use emerging technologies and yet be certain the system will work as intended?
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Phased Decision-Making How can decisions be made which meet current transportation needs while maintaining the flexibility to respond to changing conditions?

Planning efforts are directed to a better understanding of these issues, and to a clearer view of their interrelationships. Recommended policies and programs are structured in such a way that actions address these eight problem areas.

The Planning process is designed so that policies are specified and guidelines for implementation are developed. Major projects submitted are approved for implementation only when they are consistent with the adopted policies that further the region's best interests.

Policy directives adopted in the RTP are subsequently implemented through the Transportation Improvement Program, which is approved annually by the SCAG Executive Committee. The Transportation Improvement Program contains justification and documentation of those projects consistent with the adopted RTP.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Recommendations for Land Use

SCAG's Regional Development Guide contains land-use policies designed to discourage urban sprawl, preserve open space and rich agricultural lands, encourage a balance of jobs and population within metropolitan areas to discourage an increase in long work-commutes, and direct growth to urban areas with under-used utility infrastructures. These goals can be furthered by the type and amount of transportation services and facilities provided to given areas. SCAG bases its planning on the Regional Development Guide to gain a fuller understanding of impacts on regional growth and land-use patterns. An emphasis on improving service at the metropolitan (4 to 20 miles) and community (1 to 6 miles) scales is also recommended, since most travel is at these levels. However, the Plan also recognizes that it is important and necessary to serve existing and anticipated longer distance travel.

Land use is of concern to the subregional agencies also, as their plans indicate. Imperial County, for example, recommends that certain routes be designated "scenic highways", and that links to recreation areas be preserved as scenic drives. The City of Los Angeles recommends actions to decrease the need for long-distance commuter trips. VCAG stated the need to have transportation plans based on their existing land use plan. It was also stated that any modifications to the land use plan must be fed back into the planning process so that appropriate transportation decisions can be made.

Recommendations for Improving Air Quality and Conserving Energy

The RTP recommends two basic strategies to improve air quality and conserve energy: (1) a short-range program to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and (2) a long-range effort to reduce the emission of pollutants from motor vehicles.

The VMT-reduction programs (adopted in April, 1974) and additional recommendations of the RTP include:

Freeway and major-arterial programs that give preferential treatment to buses and carpools; Special reserved lanes and freeway on-ramp metering with by/pass lanes for buses and carpools.

Computer matching of commuters by home and work location to aid the formation of car- and van-pools.

Employer-sponsored incentive programs to encourage car- and van-pooling through preferential parking, flexible working hours, and other means.

Locally developed parking-restriction programs to impel the use of transit and the formation of carpools.

Some transportation control programs -- particularly the preferential-treatment freeway program -- have yet to be implemented. The 1976 RTP underscores the urgency of these efforts by recommending that:

The Santa Monica Freeway preferential lane be operative by April 1976. Implement the program for carpools only, if buses are not available at that time.

The date for allowing carpools to use the San Bernardino Busway be advanced to April 1976.

Commuter Computer accelerate their carpooler-matching program, and concentrate efforts on the Santa Monica and San Bernardino freeway corridors.

Maximum effectiveness of the preferential freeway program be assured by implementing preferential treatments and ramp metering at the same time.

The longer-range strategies are aimed at reducing emissions of pollutants from mobile sources. Measures recommended in the 1976 RTP include:

Endorsing the mandatory emission inspection/maintenance program for light-duty motor vehicles.

Emphasizing that vehicles acquired by public agencies should be low-polluting, energy-saving models; urging private firms to consider environmental impacts when acquiring or replacing their auto and truck fleets.

The transportation-control strategies to improve air quality are experimental and careful evaluation during implementation is recommended. The RTP also recommends State legislation requiring information on gasoline and diesel fuel consumption and/or sales to be filed quarterly by each county. This would enable planners to assess transportation's share of the air quality and energy problems.

Subregional agencies have recommended transportation policies and programs which would improve air quality and conserve energy. The City of Los Angeles recommends priority status for freeway construction and improvements which reduce VMT (especially within the urban core), and favors amending the Municipal Code to allow regulation of parking spaces. Riverside and San Bernardino Counties recommend a seven-part transportation control plan to improve air quality and relieve congestion. Ventura County encourages carpooling strategies and supports the existing carpooler-matching program.

Recommendations for Accessibility/Mobility

Accessibility/mobility recommendations include programs to improve transportation service consistent with policies developed for other key issues (land use, air quality, energy, and so forth). For the most part, the recommended programs provide a framework for transit, highway, aviation,

and bicycle projects.¹ Recommended transit improvements would upgrade service significantly in the near term -- particularly at the metropolitan and community scales. Rapid improvement of bus service is possible through expanding the fleet by some 2000 buses over the next five years. (Areas to be served by these buses will be identified through the SCAG transit service policies and subregional agencies as described in the RTP.) Also being considered is guideway transit. The 1975 RTP recommended development of a starter line, and the 1976 RTP endorses a corridor from Canoga Park through downtown Los Angeles to Long Beach.

The RTP augments the bus and guideway-transit plans with a range of supporting programs. Activity-center circulation systems (such as those proposed for downtown Los Angeles, LAX, downtown Long Beach, Santa Monica, and Anaheim) are encouraged to supplement line-haul transit. Additionally, park/ride lots, subscription bus programs, and extensive use of paratransit services are recommended. These low-cost capital improvement programs would greatly increase the level of transit service offered to the region's residents.

Solving problems of accessibility does not always solve mobility concerns. Indeed, many of the handicapped are made immobile because the physical design of transit vehicles does not allow them entrance. Concern for the mobility needs of individuals -- particularly the infirm elderly and the handicapped -- is expressed in an adopted policy of the 1975 RTP:

- . The elderly and handicapped shall have the same rights as other persons to utilize regular public transportation services. Employ the following policy for provision of transportation services to the handicapped:

As a long range policy, adopt and support objectives intended to facilitate the transition to fully accessible public transportation services.

¹ Detailed documentation and justification of projects consistent with this framework are contained in the annual element of the Transportation Improvement Program.

As an interim measure, implement alternate services. In acquisition of new transit vehicles and design of major transit improvements, transit operators should adopt procedures to consciously eliminate barriers to the handicapped. Establish a plan for the review of existing facilities for possible modifications.

The 1976 RTP has strengthened this policy by linking it directly to approval of transit grant applications:

As of January, 1977, SCAG approval of transit grant applications shall be based upon the existence of an interim program in the service area of each operation for the provision of services for the physically handicapped.

Until transit service reaches adequate levels, the automobile will remain the principal mode of travel. The urban roadway network was designed primarily to accommodate automobile drivers -- particularly commuters. Freeways were built and streets and roads expanded as auto traffic increased in volume. But today's excessive reliance on the automobile creates congestion, degrades air quality, and wastes energy.

This RTP advocates programs to "manage the automobile" -- but the phrase may be misleading. Careful reading of the recommendations will show that the preferred way to control the auto is through managing the channels that it uses. Proponents of banning the automobile argue in favor of making these channels less useful than they could be -- halting all freeway and roadway construction. This RTP recommends instead that the roadway network be maintained to the highest standards and even expanded to assure the most effective use of the facilities. (Policies to improve air quality and save energy can be realized by giving higher levels of service to transit and carpools, and trucks should be assured access to freeways.) New freeway construction is not rejected, but rather is assessed

more carefully -- not only on its own merits, but also on its overall contribution to the performance of the entire system.

The 1976 RTP strongly endorses funding to adequately maintain the existing roadway network. And, since available monies may never be sufficient to accomplish all the projects approved in the 1975 Plan, this RTP requires from Caltrans a report evaluating new highway construction projects (aside from those contained in the current highway budget), so that those critical to the optimal functioning of the freeway system may be identified.

Airports, bicycle, and goods movement modes are treated only briefly in the RTP. Airport recommendations stress expanding airports to their maximum capacities, and improving ground access, particularly by transit. The bicycle policies recommend bikeways that serve more than just recreational trips, provision of safe bicycle storage at transit stops and places of work, and exclusive bicycle lanes on suitable streets.

The RTP made no specific recommendations on the flow of goods. Goods movement requirements are being studied, however, and findings will be included in future updates.

Most of the subregional recommendations deal with solving accessibility and mobility problems. In all cases, transit improvements were recommended, although the range varies from providing bus shelters in Imperial County to constructing a transit "starter line" in Los Angeles County. With the exception of IVAG, each subregional agency recommended phased bus improvements. Corridors for transit guideway in Orange County were identified.

Recommendations for highway improvements were also included. Whenever a recommendation for a particular state highway was mentioned, however, the following provision was added: "SCAG endorsement involving missing links or new highway construction, excluding those projects already budgeted by the Highway Commission, is contingent upon Executive Committee review of the highway system evaluation report prepared by Caltrans." This provision was necessary to insure consistency between regional and subregional plans.

Recommendations for airport development were submitted by the City of Los Angeles and by VCAG. These recommendations are at the policy level and do not contain specific improvement projects. Bicycle recommendations were developed by the City of Los Angeles, Orange County Multi-Modal Committee, and VCAG. Goods movement policy recommendations were developed by the City of Los Angeles, and preservation of recreational water facilities was recommended by IVAG.

Recommendations for Allocating Financial Resources

These RTP recommendations deal with strategies to ensure that monies for needed improvements will be available. The criteria for allocating monies in the near term are included.

While raising necessary revenues may seem a straightforward task, it is actually quite complex. Many funding sources exist, but circumstances at the time they were established dictated various restraints on the use of the monies. Some funds for transportation may be used only for highways; others are restricted to transit, or aviation, ports, and so on. And within each mode's funds are smaller funds set aside for particular

types of projects -- for example, some transit monies can be spent only on guideway projects.

The RTP recommends making existing funds more "flexible" -- that is, removing or relaxing restraints on how they may be used. Recommendations include amending the Transportation Development Act of 1971 to remove such restraints, and actively promoting legislation to allow more flexible use of transportation funds from federal and state sources. The Proposition 5 process should be modified so that monies can be used for any type of transit improvement -- not just fixed guideway projects. Finally, the RTP recommends that state gas tax revenues be used for transportation without regard to current percentage limitations.

The 1975 RTP stressed the need for additional transit funds, and Proposition 5 monies seemed a potential source. In the summer of 1975, the SCAG Executive Committee endorsed the use of Proposition 5 funds (state gas tax resources) in Los Angeles County for planning and preliminary engineering of the SCRTD starter line, the LAX people-mover, and the people-mover for the City of Long Beach. Remaining Proposition 5 in Los Angeles County funds were recommended for banking for the SCRTD project.

Criteria for allocating resources were adopted in the 1975 RTP. These include: population, improved air quality, energy savings, minimized negative impacts (from transportation control measures) on accessibility/mobility, and safety. Since policies can change over time, the criteria should be updated to reflect contemporary concerns. These criteria, then, are for the near term, and not necessarily for the entire planning program.

Recommendations for Technological Change, Institutional Arrangements, and Phased Decision-Making

The RTP is structured to be responsive to future needs and policies. To counter uncertainties inherent in any transportation program of this magnitude, the RTP recommends an approach that allows identification of immediate needs, incorporation of new technologies, evaluation of how proposed alternatives respond to need, and research for additional improvements to further the region's desired growth.

First, the RTP recommends "staging" major decisions -- adopting policies that guide long-term transportation improvements but leave the "hardware" or technology options open. In this way, the desired level of service is identified but the use of new technologies is not ruled out.

Second, policy guidelines must be formulated so that improvements for rail, port, pipeline, and truck modes can be developed and assessed in future RTP updates.

Finally, the RTP recommends creation of a citizen's advisory committee by the SCRTD. This recommendation evolved from comments often voiced at citizen workshops and forums held during preparation of the RTP.

Subregional agencies also developed recommendations for institutional arrangements, technological changes, and phased decision-making. Both SCAG and the Subregional RTP participants view transportation planning as a phased process -- one that develops the recommended long-range system in an incremental fashion. Deferral of some modal improvements is thus recommended until key issues are resolved, and incorporation of new technologies is mentioned.

Since the Regional Transportation Plan is designed around the eight major problems, they appear in nearly all of the plan chapters. Each chapter has been structured in such a way as to address one or more of those issues. This approach allows the transportation planning process to become more sensitive to policy issues, and more responsive to future needs.

Chapter Three of the Regional Transportation Plan contains the adopted Goals, Policies and Objectives of SCAG and each of the subregional participants in the planning process. They are grouped according to each of the major problem areas and the degree to which they address each problem is indicated. This chapter points out the lack of subregional policies for the allocation of resources and indicates that such policies must be further defined on a regional and subregional level to guide development of a balanced transportation system.

Chapter Four contains a proposed process for determining transportation Needs and Deficiencies. It begins by describing existing needs assessment processes and suggests that coordination must exist across agency and geographic boundaries. In addition, most existing processes fail to adequately identify basic transportation needs, do not incorporate key relationships between transportation and land use, and fail to examine alternative futures.

The process proposed in Chapter Four relates to the problem of accessibility and mobility in that it views the transportation system in terms of its ability to provide access to the opportunities desired by the region's residents. In addition, the process relates to the issue of land use: it will attempt to identify deficiencies that can be remedied

not only by improvements to the transportation system, but also by redistributing opportunities, such as employment, housing, or public services.

Chapter Five, Evaluation of Transportation System Alternatives presents the results of the past year's regional analytical efforts. The major problems are clearly reflected in this chapter, which consists of a series of working paper summaries, each treating a particular problem.

Analysis activities over the past year concentrated on selected problem areas, rather than transportation system alternatives, which have been evaluated in previous planning cycles. Primary emphasis was given to the problems of air quality and energy, especially as they are caused by the excessive use of the automobile. The analysis considered three ways of improving automobile emissions and fuel consumption: (1) improving travel conditions; (2) reducing vehicle miles of travel; and (3) improving the technical characteristics of the auto fleet. The analysis concluded that the latter approach was the most desirable, given considerations of feasibility, equity, and costs, but it also pointed out that VMT reducing strategies can provide benefits. The issue of accessibility and mobility has been discussed in three analytical papers. The first provides a suggested process for developing transit service policies. These service policies would be useful in developing future criteria for an equitable distribution of transit service improvements in the SCAG region. The second analytical paper assesses the role of the private sector in providing public transportation services. Emphasis is placed on paratransit services (dial-a-ride bus, taxi, jitney, subscription bus, and vanpools). The third paper is an evaluation of the proposed guideway transit starter line. This

analysis reviews relevant technical aspects of the charter line issue which should influence the decision-making process. System operation and construction costs, social benefits, patronage estimates, and environmental consequences are all discussed.

The problem of allocation of resources is addressed in the last two summary papers of the chapter. The first is a financial analysis of two major issues confronting the region at this time: (1) the uncertainty of financing the proposed public transit system and (2) the extent of current funding constraints on the region's highway and roadway system. Without additional sources of revenues, most of the region's public transit operations will face severe operating deficits by the early 1980's. Because of budgetary cutbacks, inflation and diversion of funds to public transit, the state highway program can only realistically operate and rehabilitate the existing system, and perhaps undertake very limited construction.

The paper on the highway program describes the range of information needed from Caltrans in order to determine the regional priorities for new construction. It is expected that a review of the highway program will be completed by Caltrans within the next few months.

Chapter Six contains Recommendations for the development of transportation in Southern California. They, too, are categorized by problem areas. Recommendations in this chapter are both regional and subregional. Those adopted in 1975 are retained and those added through the 1976 update process are noted.

The Implementation Program, Chapter 7, provides additional information on the recommended plan. In this chapter, agencies responsible for implementing plans are identified. There is a schedule of major

improvement, and a financial program. This section stages the plan recommendations so that, as improvements are implemented and evaluated, feedback information can be brought back into the refinement and evaluation of future options. Thus, this chapter tries to develop substantive solutions to problems of Allocation of Resources, Institutional Responsibility, Technological Change, and Phased Decision Making.

Appendices contain supplement information. Appendix A is a compilation of the public's questions and concerns regarding the RTP and staff response to the issues that were raised. Appendix B contains the Environmental Impact Report, which is a summary impact assessment of the recommended plan. Appendix C presents the technical assumptions and references documents that were used in development of the Plan. Appendix D is a brief review of part transportation planning programs. Appendix E is a list of those subregional recommendations which are not recommended for adoption in the 1976 RTP.

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